



HEROIN: getting help

Heroin use is on the rise among Wisconsin's young people. It's replacing prescription drugs as the party drug of choice, and that's dangerous. Snorted, smoked or injected, heroin is highly addictive—and users risk overdose or death with every hit. Learn how to recognize heroin use and what you can do to help.

THE GATEWAY

The link between prescription drug abuse and heroin is unmistakable. Among teens, prescriptions are the most commonly used drugs besides marijuana, and nearly half of the pills being abused are painkillers. When the popular painkiller OxyContin was reformulated to prevent its abuse, heroin quickly became a cheap, easy-to-get alternative.

Prescription drugs like OxyContin, Percocet and Vicodin are the primary gateways to heroin use. So talk to your loved ones, and keep an eye on the prescriptions in your home.



According to the Foundation for a Drug-Free World, an estimated 13.5 million people in the world take opioids (opium-like painkillers)—including 9.2 million who use heroin.

KNOW THE MEDICATIONS IN YOUR HOME

- Keep track of your bottles' locations and pill quantities.
- Make sure you know what can be refilled and what has been refilled.
- Dispose of unused pills properly. Take advantage of local medication disposal programs or the National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day. If you throw pills away, mix them with something undesirable like coffee grounds or kitty litter first.
- If your child is prescribed a painkiller, talk to your doctor and monitor its use closely.

THE WARNING SIGNS

Everyone thinks they'll only do it once, but at least 75% of those who try heroin use it again. And the spiral from experimentation to addiction can happen fast. After all, adolescent brains are still developing, and that makes young people particularly susceptible to addiction.

Heroin users don't act like themselves. But by the time the signs are really obvious (track marks, skin abscesses, extreme weight loss, illness and dramatic changes in behavior), heroin addiction has done its worst. Early detection gives addicts a better chance at a successful recovery.

KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- They can't concentrate; they oversleep or nod off during the day.
- New friendships suddenly replace all of their old ones.
- They ditch work or school and miss curfews. Their grades start to fall.
- Phone calls are quieter. They're secretive and demand more privacy.
- Small possessions get lost or go missing, including money.
- They forget things and start breaking little promises.
- Nothing interests them. They drop their hobbies and favorite pastimes.
- They lose weight, look ill and stop eating often or well.
- You find cigarette filters cut in half, syringe caps or burnt pieces of foil.
- They try to hide their eyes, along with bruises, "insect bites," etc.

THE WAY TO HELP

Heroin addiction is a progressive condition—the more advanced it gets, the more difficult it is to treat. So if you think someone you know is struggling with addiction or experimenting with heroin or prescription painkillers, talk to them. And seek professional help right away to find a treatment plan that meets your loved one's needs.

There are a number of treatment options out there, from inpatient treatment centers and outpatient rehabilitation programs to intensive drug therapies. There are also support services to help addicts and their loved ones throughout the recovery process. It will take time, and things may not get better right away. Don't give up.



Carol holds a photo of her son Craig, who died of an overdose in 2009. Before using heroin, Craig experimented with OxyContin.

KNOW WHERE TO START

Call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or visit findtreatment.samhsa.gov

Free, completely confidential and available 24/7/365, SAMHSA's National Helpline and online Treatment Locator can help you find substance abuse treatment facilities, support groups and community-based organizations in your area.

Visit TheFlyEffect.com

Experience the heroin spiral for yourself, learn more about its destructive power and hear from real heroin survivors right here in Wisconsin.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

visit
doj.state.wi.us
or call
(608) 266-1221

